

Rec'd PCT/PTO 29 JUN 2004

NOVEL PHARMACEUTICAL DOSAGE FORMS
AND METHOD FOR PRODUCING SAME

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FIELD OF THE INVENTION

This invention relates generally to pharmaceutical dosage forms and their manufacture, and more particularly to a novel dosage form in which an active agent is combined with a solid excipient having a foamed structure.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Pharmaceutical preparations, especially solid preparations intended for oral administration, are frequently supplied in so-called "flash-dissolve" tablets, which dissolve almost immediately, i.e., within seconds, upon contact with saliva in the patient's mouth. Flash-dissolve tablets are particularly desirable for use as solid pediatric oral preparations and for administration to adult patients who have difficulty in swallowing tablets.

Flash-dissolve tablets typically utilize special, highly soluble formulations and disintegration promoters, and also have a high surface area-to-volume ratio to promote quick solution. In the past, because of their high friability, flash-dissolve tablets could not be subjected to post-formation handling, and to processing steps such as coating, ink-jet printing, etc., without breaking up. Therefore, it has been conventional practice to produce flash-dissolve tablets by freeze-drying the tablet material in the blisters of a blister package in which they were ultimately to be

sold. The tablets took their shape from the blisters, and consequently the shape of the tablets was difficult to control.

5 In the case of a swallowed tablet, low density is desirable in order to make the tablet "gastro-retentive". Unlike a heavier tablet, which would pass quickly into the duodenum, a low density tablet can float in the stomach while it dissolves slowly. A low-density, gastro-retentive tablet may be formed, for
10 example, by pressing together grains of porous material formed by extruding a polymer containing a blowing agent and a drug substance, as described in European Patent Application 94924386.9, published on June 26, 1996 under number EP 0 717 988 A1. Another gastro-retentive tablet
15 is described in United States patent 6,312,726, granted on November 6, 2001. In accordance with patent 6,312,726, an auxiliary blowing agent such as aluminum hydroxide gel, synthetic aluminosilicate, calcium hydrogen phosphate, calcium carbonate, sodium hydrogen
20 carbonate, calcium hydrogen carbonate or talc, is used as an additive in order to generate a multiplicity of microfine pores or air spaces uniformly distributed within an extruded pharmaceutical product. The pores are described as having a mean diameter as small as 10-
25 20 microns. Conventional low density, gastro-retentive tablets, however, have been prone to weakness and tend to break apart in handling. Accordingly, they have been subject to problems similar to those encountered in the case of flash-dissolve tablets.

30 Various other porous tablets have been proposed. For example, United States patent 3,885,026, granted on May 20, 1975, describes tablets in which pores are

formed by sublimation of an adjuvant such as urethane, urea, ammonium carbonate, etc. in a tablet formed in a tablet press. These tablets are porous, but the pores are in the form of comparatively large hollow spaces and
5 canals through which a solvent can penetrate. They are readily dissolved, but are neither flash-dissolving nor gastro-retentive.

United States patent 6,150,424, granted November 21, 2000, describes a process for extruding solid foamed
10 thermoplastic polymer drug carriers with an active substance produced by melt-extrusion of an active ingredient such as ibuprofen in the thermoplastic binder, homo- or co-polymers of N-vinylpyrrolidone along with a blowing agent such as carbon dioxide, nitrogen,
15 air, helium, argon, CFC or N₂O. This process introduces volatile blowing agents into the extrudate melt. The expanded extrudate is shaped into a dosage form after extrusion.

Another problem encountered in tablet manufacture
20 is that tablets, including porous tablets of the kind described in European Patent Application 94924386.9, and U.S. Patent 3,885,026, are formed by tablet presses. Such presses, although rapid in their operation, are very expensive. Furthermore, they must be shut down
25 frequently for maintenance.

Attempts have been made to produce pharmaceutical tablets by injection molding, which was a promising alternative to the tablet press method. However, despite these attempts, injection molding has never been
30 successful, and most tablets are still produced by tablet presses.

Various articles of manufacture, such as automobile dashboards, etc. have been formed from resins, such as PET, polystyrene, polyethylene, and PVC, which are expanded by a blowing agent, typically a low molecular weight organic compound mixed into a polymer matrix and heated to cause decomposition of the compound, resulting in the release of a gas (or gases) such as nitrogen, carbon dioxide, and carbon monoxide. Resins can also be expanded by physical processes not involving decomposition or other chemical reaction. For example, a gas may be introduced as a component of a polymer charge or introduced under pressure into a molten polymer.

These standard resin expansion processes produce foamed resins having cells which are relatively large, i.e., on the order of 100 microns, or larger, with the void fraction, that is the volume of the cells divided by the total volume, typically ranging from 20%-40% in structural foams, and from 80%-90% in insulation foams. The number of cells produced per unit volume is relatively low (on the order of 10^6 cells/cm³), and the size distribution of the cells is typically broad; that is the cell size is far from uniform throughout the foamed material.

A great deal of research and development work has been carried out on microcellular and supermicrocellular foam process technology. This technology has made it possible to produce expanded plastics having much smaller cells, and a much more narrow cell size distribution, with the result that the plastics exhibit a strength to weight ratio substantially greater than that of conventional foamed plastics. Microcellular

foaming has proven useful in producing stable, small cell, materials at low cost, and products made from microcellular foams have been produced on a commercial scale.

5 Microcellular plastics are generally defined as foamed plastics characterized by cell sizes less than about 100 microns. Typical cell sizes are in the range from about 1 to 100 microns. Cell densities are typically on the order of 10^9 cells per cubic centimeter.
10 The specific densities are typically in the range from 5 to 95 percent of the density of the polymer, and the void fraction is similarly in the range of about 5 to 95 percent. These cells are smaller than the flaws preexisting within the polymers and, thus, do not
15 compromise the polymers' specific mechanical properties. The result is a lower density material with no decrease in specific strength and a significant increase in toughness compared to the original polymers.

 With a further reduction in cell size and an
20 increase in cell density, supermicrocellular plastics can be produced, having cell sizes less than 1 micron, typically in the range from about 0.1 to 1.0 micron. Supermicrocellular plastics can have and cell densities greater than 10^9 cells per cubic centimeter, and may be
25 in the range of 10^{12} to 10^{15} cells per cubic centimeter.

 Either microcellular or supermicrocellular plastics may be used in the invention for producing solid oral dosage forms containing an active agent. Unless
30 otherwise indicated, the term "microcellular," as used herein, should be understood to encompass both microcellular and supermicrocellular materials.

Microcellular foams, and processes and equipment for making microcellular foams, are described in the following United States Patents:

	4,473,665	Sept. 25, 1984	Martini-Vvedensky et al.
5	4,922,082	May 1, 1990	Bredt et al.
	5,158,986	October 27, 1992	Cha et al.
	5,160,674	November 3, 1992	Colton et al.
	5,334,356	August 2, 1994	Baldwin et al.
	5,866,053	February 2, 1999	Park et al.
10	6,005,013	December 21, 1999	Suh et al.
	6,051,174	April 18, 2000	Park et al.
	6,231,942	May 15, 2001	Blizard et al.
	6,322,347	November 27, 2001	Xu, J.

and in published International patent applications WO 15 98/08667 and WO 99/32544. The disclosures of all of the above-listed patents and publications are here incorporated by reference in their entirety.

In general, microcellular foams are produced by injecting a gas, or a supercritical fluid (SCF), into a polymer while the polymer is under pressure and at an elevated temperature, and then reducing the pressure and temperature to cause a large number of cells to form in the polymer, and controlling the growth of the cells by appropriate processing conditions.

25 The production of microcellular foams is typically carried out by injecting a supercritical fluid, for example carbon dioxide, into a polymer while the polymer is maintained under an elevated pressure. A supercritical fluid is defined as a material maintained at a temperature exceeding a critical temperature and at a pressure exceeding a critical pressure so that the material is in a fluid state in which it exhibits

properties of both a gas and a liquid. The supercritical fluid and the polymer form a single-phase solution. The pressure acting on the solution is then rapidly reduced, resulting in controlled nucleation at a very large number of nucleation sites. The gas then forms bubbles, the growth of which is controlled by carefully controlling pressure and temperature. The foams can be injection molded in conventional molding equipment.

Microcellular foam technology, although highly effective and useful for producing traditional articles of manufacture, such as automobile dashboards, etc., has not been applied to the pharmaceutical industry for injection molding of tablets. Apparently, the failures experienced by pharmaceutical manufacturers in attempts to produce tablets by injection molding have deterred them from going forward with research and development in the use of microcellular foam technology.

BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

It has been determined that microcellular foam technology can in fact be utilized successfully in the production of pharmaceutical tablets, and that microcellular foam technology affords significant advantages, both in the manufacturing process and in the product itself. More particularly, microcellular foam can produce molded tablets having desirable properties and consistent quality, rapidly and at low cost.

In accordance with the invention, pharmaceutically acceptable dosage forms are made by the following steps. First, a non-thermosetting excipient polymer is supplied. The polymer is preferably pre-mixed with a

pharmaceutical agent to form a homogeneous mixture, and heated to form an extrudable mass using a conventional, twin-screw extruder. To form the pharmaceutical dosage forms, the extruded polymer/ pharmaceutical agent

5 mixture is cut into pellets, which have a free-flowing property. The pellets are fed into the hopper of an injection molding machine, in which, while maintaining the polymer at elevated pressure, a single phase solution is formed, preferably by injecting into the

10 polymer a substance which is a gas under ambient temperature and pressure, and which is substantially non-reactive with the pharmaceutical agent. The polymer, which has by this time been mixed homogeneously with the pharmaceutical agent, is then molded into solid

15 dosage forms, and in the process of molding the solid dosage forms, the elevated pressure is reduced to a level at which cells are nucleated in large numbers, each cell containing the gas. After the cells are nucleated, the temperature of the polymer is rapidly

20 reduced to limit cell growth.

The substance which is introduced into the polymer may be introduced in the form of a gas. The gas is preferably soluble in the polymer, and, where the gas is soluble, the level to which the elevated pressure is

25 reduced must be a level at which the solution becomes thermodynamically unstable and the gas evolves from the solution in the form of bubbles. Alternatively, a gas which is not soluble in the polymer may be used, nitrogen being a typical example. The use of nitrogen

30 is described in United States Patent 5,034,171, whose disclosure is incorporated by reference in its entirety herein. In accordance with a preferred method, however,

the substance introduced into the polymer is introduced, in the form of a supercritical fluid.

The pressure and temperature reduction steps are preferably carried out at rates such that the maximum
5 void dimension in the solid dosage form is in the range from about 2 to 100 microns and the void fraction is in the range of about 5 to 95 percent.

The non-thermosetting polymerized plastics material is preferably a polyol, suitably lactitol, xylitol and
10 sorbitol, erythritol, mannitol, and maltitol. Lactitol is preferred because it has an ideal melting point, because of its flowability, because it is non-hygroscopic, and because it returns to solid form after melting.

15 Other substances, for example, polyethylene oxide, can be utilized as the non-thermosetting plastics material. Additional ingredients, such as starches or compounds classified by their dextrose equivalents, such as maltodextrin can be included in the polymer.

20 The process of the invention produces a novel pharmaceutical dosage form in which the active pharmaceutical agent and the solid excipient are in combination as a homogeneous solid mixture primarily in the form of a rigid microcellular foam. When the foam
25 is formed into tablets or other dosage forms by injection molding, the rigid microcellular foam is enclosed within a skin having a density substantially greater than that of the microcellular foam, but having the same composition as that of said solid mixture.

30 The homogeneous solid mixture can be made from a composition having a sufficiently high solubility in saliva that a tablet composed of the mixture will

dissolve substantially immediately in the mouth upon oral administration. Microcellular foam is particularly well suited for use in flash-dissolve tablets. Its cellular structure promotes quick solution, but it is
5 much less friable than the materials used in conventional flash-dissolve tablets.

The cellular structure of the microcellular foam also enables it to have a low density such that the overall density of the dosage form is substantially less
10 than that of stomach fluids, so that the dosage form is gastro-retentive.

The technique of saturating a mixture of a polymer and an active pharmaceutical agent with a gas, or introducing a supercritical fluid into the mixture, can
15 significantly improve the rate of production of an extrudate for injection molding of pharmaceutical dosage forms. The process makes it possible to achieve desired cell sizes and densities in a continuous process, at a reasonable cost, and with superior quality control.

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BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 is a schematic diagram illustrating the process for producing pharmaceutical dosage forms in accordance with the invention;

25 FIG. 2 is a schematic view of the extruder and mold;

FIG. 3 is a diagram showing a typical mold cavity configuration; and

FIG. 4 is a photograph illustrating a portion of a
30 pharmaceutical dosage form in accordance with the invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

The invention is directed to production of novel drug/active agent-impregnated microcellular foams, in solid dosage forms such as tablets or caplets. By the
5 adaptation of microcellular foam techniques, used heretofore for producing strong, light weight products such as automotive dashboards and plastic eating utensils, to the manufacture of pharmaceutical dosage forms, it is now possible to take advantage of injection
10 molding or extrusion to produce high quality solid dosage forms that have conventional, time release, or flash-dispersal solution characteristics, and to produce these dosage forms at low cost by forming them continuously over a long time without interruption.

15 Referring to FIG. 1, as a preliminary step, a pharmaceutically active agent and a polymer are blended in a powder blender 2 and subjected to melt extrusion in a conventional twin-screw extruder 4 having a drive motor 6, a hopper 8 and a pair of screws in side-by-
20 side, meshing relationship, one of which is seen at 10. Heaters 12, 14 and 16 are provided along the extruder 4 to establish separate heated zones. Mixing elements 18 are provided at intervals along the screws in order to ensure homogeneity in the polymer-pharmaceutical agent
25 blend in the extrusion. A liquid injection port 20 is also provided at a location about half way along the length of the barrel of the extruder.

The mixture advanced by the twin screws is extruded through a die 22 having a heater 24. The extruded
30 mixture is preferably in the form of one or more circular cylindrical strands 26, each having a diameter of about 2-3mm. The strand 26 is air-cooled on a strand

conveyor 28 and cut into pellets 30, each about 2-3mm in length, by a strand pelletizer 32 comprising a pair of rollers 36 and a rotating cutter 38.

The proportion of active agent in the mixture is typically between .1% and 70%, suitably 10 - 50%, of the total weight of the mixture. Various additional ingredients, used to control the properties of the product, or of its intermediate forms, may be included. These additional ingredients may be, for example, binders, sweeteners, flavorants, or colorants. The additional ingredients may also be disintegration promoters such as effervescent agents or substances which absorb water and expand. Lubricants to prevent the mixture from adhering to the mold may also be included.

The melt extrusion process results in homogeneous pellets 30, which are delivered to the injection molding machine 40 as shown in FIG. 2. The pellets are introduced into a hopper 42, located near one end of an elongated, hollow barrel 44. A heated nozzle 46, formed at the opposite end of the barrel, is connected to mold 48, which is a multicavity mold. The barrel 44 is heated by an electrical heating coil (not shown) or other suitable heating device in order to melt the pellets after they pass from the hopper into the interior of the barrel. A screw 50 extends longitudinally within barrel 44, and has a one-way valve 52 at its end nearest the nozzle 46. The screw is rotated by a motor 54, and is also reciprocable longitudinally within the barrel by an actuator 56. The screw is shown in its withdrawn position. A valve 58 is

provided, through which a gas or SCF can be injected into the interior of the barrel.

In the operation of the injection molding machine, the screw 50 is initially moved forward to a position in which the one-way valve is seated against seat 60, closing off the nozzle 46. The rotation of the screw forces the melted mixture forward while causing the screw itself to move longitudinally in the opposite direction, forming a cushion 62 of melted material in the barrel forward of the one-way valve 52. While the screw is operating, gas, or supercritical fluid, is introduced into the barrel through valve 58. After the cushion is formed, the actuator 56 initiates an injection stroke, pushing the screw 50 toward the nozzle and thereby forcing the cushion of melted material through the nozzle and into the mold 48 during the injection stroke.

The mold 48 is a multicavity mold comprising two mating parts, 62 and 64, which can be separated from each other for removal of the molded dosage forms. Each mold part is cooled by passing a coolant through a coolant inlet port 66 and exhausting coolant through a coolant outlet port 68. The coolant is cycled through a refrigerator/heat exchanger (not shown). The melted mixture, comprising polymer, active pharmaceutical agent, and dissolved gas or SCF, is injected into mold 48 through sprue 70.

In FIG. 3, which illustrates a typical cold runner mold cavity configuration, the radial runners 72 connect the centrally located sprue 70 to the mold cavities 74, which are disposed in a circular pattern. In the configuration shown, each radial runner 72 serves two

cavities 74, there being two oblique branches 76 extending respectively to the two cavities from an intermediate point 78 on each radial runner. The connection of the oblique runner branches 76 to the radial runners 72 at intermediate points 78, short of the outer ends of the radial runners, ensures that the melted material delivered through each radial runner will consistently flow into both cavities served by that runner.

Alternatively, a "hot runner" system, known to those skilled in the art, can be used. In such a system, polymer flowing through the nozzle 46 enters heated channels that supply molten polymer to nozzles that feed individual cavities. Each nozzle is also heated to ensure that the polymer remains in a molten condition throughout the entire molding cycle. In this way, material is not wasted, as in the cold runner system, and cycle times are reduced, resulting in a more efficient process. A "valve-gated" nozzle, one having a central rod for shutting off the nozzle outlet, or a "hot-tip" nozzle, where the outlet remains open, may be used. The "valve-gated" nozzle is preferred for the molding of foam tablets, as it will maintain molten material under pressure while the mold is opened for the ejection of molded tablets.

The processing of the mixture in injection molding machine 40 is preferably carried out by injecting a supercritical fluid, such as carbon dioxide or nitrogen, into the melted mixture within barrel 44 of the injection molding machine. At the location at which the fluid is injected, the pressure on the melted mixture is sufficiently high that the fluid remains in its

supercritical state, so that the fluid and the melted mixture form a single phase solution. The single phase solution is then injected, by axial movement of the screw 50, into the mold, where the reduction in pressure allows the supercritical fluid to come out of solution in the form of gas bubbles. The gas forms a closed cell foam having a matrix of voids surrounded by a solid lattice. The coolant in the mold limits the expansion of the gas by rapidly solidifying the polymer, thereby keeping the maximum dimension of the voids within in a range of about 2 to 100 microns, a size much smaller than the voids in a conventionally produced foamed polymer.

As shown in FIG. 4, the voids have a nearly uniform distribution throughout the foam, and a substantially uniform size, the sizes of almost all of the voids being within a relatively small portion of a preferred range of 10 to 50 microns. The void fraction, that is, the volume of the cells divided by the total volume of the foam, is preferably in the range of about 5% to 95%.

In accordance with a preferred embodiment of the invention, a microcellular foamed material is formed by injection molding in three stages. First a polymer/supercritical fluid mixture is formed. Then, the formation of a single-phase polymer/supercritical fluid solution is completed. Finally, thermodynamic instability is induced in the solution to produce nucleation and expansion of the solution to produce a foamed material having a large number of microscopic voids or cells. Although the process specifically described utilizes supercritical fluids, similar

techniques can be used to obtain microcellular materials using gases rather than supercritical fluids.

The polymer/supercritical fluid solution is produced continuously by injecting a supercritical
5 fluid, such as carbon dioxide or nitrogen, into the molten polymer in the barrel 36 of the injection molding machine. The amount of supercritical fluid delivered is preferably metered either by using a positive displacement pump (not shown), or by varying the
10 injection pressure of the supercritical fluid as it passes through a porous material (not shown), which acts to resist the fluid flow. The metered supercritical fluid is then delivered to the extrusion barrel where it is mixed with the molten polymer flowing therein to form
15 a single phase polymer/supercritical fluid mixture.

The supercritical fluid in the mixture then diffuses into the polymer melt to complete the formation of a uniform, single-phase solution of polymer and supercritical fluid. The weight ratio of supercritical
20 fluid to polymer is typically about 10% or more. The maximum amount of a supercritical fluid soluble in a polymer depends on the working pressure and the temperature of the barrel. Using high pressures and/or lower processing temperatures increases the maximum
25 amount of supercritical fluid soluble in the polymer. Therefore, higher pressures and/or lower temperatures are preferable, in order to dissolve the maximum amount of gas, to achieve a high ratio of supercritical fluid to polymer, and in order to achieve high nucleation cell
30 densities.

When the polymer/fluid system, containing a sufficient amount of supercritical fluid, becomes a

uniform and homogeneous single-phase solution, the pressure is rapidly reduced to induce thermodynamic instability and to promote a high rate of bubble nucleation in the solution. Typical pressure drop rates
5 used in accordance with the invention to produce foamed pharmaceutical dosage forms are higher than the rates previously used for producing microcellular foamed parts. The pressure drop rate in accordance with the invention preferably exceeds 0.9 GPa/s.

10 The nucleated polymer/supercritical fluid solution can be supplied either immediately or after a delay, at a selected pressure, to a shaping system such as a die, where expansion and foaming of the solution occurs. In order to prevent the final cell shape from being
15 distorted, the nucleated polymer/supercritical fluid solution can be maintained under pressure within the die until the shaping process has been completed.

By the technique described above, a continuous stream of microcellular, or supermicrocellular polymer
20 is produced. A wide variety of polymers, including but not limited to amorphous and/or semicrystalline polymers, can be used, so long as they are capable of absorbing a gas or a supercritical fluid. Moreover, any gas or supercritical fluid can be used, provided that it
25 is sufficiently soluble in the polymer that is being processed.

Chemical blowing agents may also be used in accordance with the invention, but must be pharmaceutically acceptable, that is, they must meet
30 various guidelines for toxicity, etc. Generally accepted chemical blowing agents for use in the injection molding of PVC, polypropylene, and

polyethylene, for example, include, but are not limited to: azodicarbonamides ($\text{NH}_2\text{-CON=NCO-NH}_2$, with or without modified substitution products), offered by Uniroyal under the trademark CELOGEN AZ; sulphonyl
5 hydrazines/dinitropentamethylenetetramine/p-toluene sulphonyl semicarbazide; ammonium or sodium bicarbonate (which upon heating will release CO_2). Both ammonium and sodium bicarbonate are USP reagents and can be ingested. Thus they are preferred chemical blowing agents for use
10 in production of pharmaceutically acceptable tablets.

Suitable gas blowing agents for direct injection into the melted polymer include, but are not limited to, chlorofluorocarbons, hydrofluorocarbons, nitrogen, carbon dioxide, argon, and aliphatic hydrocarbons.

15 The chlorofluorocarbons, CFC-11, CFC-12, used historically to make foamed polystyrene products, but banned in most countries because of their ozone depletion potential, have been replaced with HCFCs and HFCs, which exhibit reduced, or zero, ozone depletion
20 potential. DuPont produces FORMACEL-Z2 (HFC-152a), FORMACEL-S (HCFC-22) and FORMACEL-Z4 (HFC-134A) and Elf Atochem produces a similar selection under the brand name FORANE (HFC-141b and HFC-134a). A preferred chlorofluorocarbon blowing agent for use in accordance
25 with the invention is HFC-134a.

Nitrogen, carbon dioxide, and argon, all of which have been injected into melts of industrial polymers such as polypropylene, polystyrene and polyethylene, etc., to form structural foams, are preferred for use in
30 accordance with the invention, as these gases can be used in the supercritical range, to produce a finer, more uniform, closed cell size.

Examples of aliphatic hydrocarbons which can be utilized as gas blowing agents for direct injection into the melted polymer, are butane, propane, and heptane.

Reaction injection molding (RIM) is also
5 potentially usable to produce microcellular products in accordance with the invention. In reaction injection molding, a polymer mix is heat-activated to initiate a chemical reaction in which a gas evolves, forming bubbles in the melt. For example polyurethane foam is
10 generally produced in this manner. Some polyurethane foams are hydrophilic, can absorb large quantities of water, and can be useful as wound dressings. At present polyurethane is not approved for oral ingestion. However it is contemplated that suitable ingestible,
15 microcellular dosage forms can be produced by reaction injection molding.

The process in accordance with the invention can be used to produce a water-soluble foam product which can be formed into a pledgette. A water-soluble, foam
20 pledgette, suitable for introduction into a nasal passage, can incorporate a desired active agent or agents, for instance suitable antibiotics to treat nosocomial infections in patients or medical staff. The process can also be used to produce water-soluble foam
25 products containing active agents for application to wound dressings. In this case, the active agents can be, for example, mupirocin, the plueromutilins or other topical antibiotics or antiviral agents or co-formulations with other agents, such as silver
30 sulfisalazine. Similarly, the water-soluble foam product can be formed into a suppository or pessary

suitable for administration into the rectum or vaginal cavity.

The foam product in accordance with the invention can be utilized as a post-surgical sponge to staunch
5 blood flow and absorb secretions following, for instance, nasal surgery. However unlike conventional, commercially available, post-surgical sponges, which are typically made of insoluble, but swellable, polyvinyl alcohol (PVA), a post-surgical sponge in accordance with
10 the invention can utilize a water soluble polymer containing an active agent intended for absorption into the patient. The post-surgical sponge in accordance with the invention can therefore have not only a fluid-absorbing effect, but also a pharmacological effect.

15 As mentioned previously, a particularly useful embodiment of this invention is a tablet, preferably a flash-dispersion, or flash-dissolving tablet, formed of a microcellular foamed polymer, such as a polyol or polyethylene oxide, in which an active pharmaceutical
20 composition has been incorporated. Among the advantages of these flash-dispersion formulations are that they are especially suitable for pediatric patients and others who have difficulty in swallowing, its ease of administration, and the ease with which care givers can
25 confirm dosing in the case of institutionalized patients. The microcellular structure of the dosage form ensures good control over the void fraction and enables the manufacturer to maintain the dosage in a given tablet within very close tolerances. The
30 microcellular internal configuration also makes it possible to achieve a relatively high void fraction, which contributes to rapid solution of the tablet, while

at the same time producing a tablet having sufficient resistance to breaking up in handling that it can be supplied in conventional bottles rather than in blister packages.

5 The tablets can be produced by extrusion without injection molding, in which case the dosage can be determined by cutting the extrusion to a desired length. The process of extrusion and cutting has the advantage that the desired dosage levels can be easily changed.

10 Elimination of the injection molding step reduces production time, reduces the cost per tablet, and avoids some environmental concerns about coloring and coating. Preferably, however, the tablet is injection molded, and, unlike the tablet formed by extrusion and cutting,

15 it will have a skin which is more dense than the interior of the tablet, as shown in FIG. 4. The skin contributes to the strength of the tablet, and its resistance to friability, and also makes it possible to print, emboss or engrave information on the tablet in

20 the molding process.

 In an alternative embodiment, the pharmaceutical composition can be provided in a non-soluble, acid-stable polymer foam, or an erodable polymer foam. Because of the foam structure, the density of the tablet

25 can be made substantially less than the density of stomach fluids. The lower density dosage form is gastroretentive in that it floats in the stomach fluids, and allows for the leaching of the drug from the foam matrix for gastric delivery, or sustained release

30 gastric delivery.

 Various types of final products can be made by the techniques described herein. These include products in

the following general categories: flash dispersal products, buccal dosage products, sachet/effervescent products, suppositories or pessaries, and conventional oral tablets.

5 Flash dispersal products typically provide for delivery of a low dose, high potency drug, preferably containing less than 35 mg of active agent. Suitable active agents for use herein include REQUIP®, AVANDIA®, PAXIL®, and AMERGE®.

10 In buccal dosage products, also intended for solution in the mouth, it is preferable that the polymer be sufficiently mucoadhesive to coat the buccal/sublingual mucosa. Alternatively, if the coating can be retained in the mouth long enough to allow for
15 drug absorption, and if the drug has a sufficient permeability across mucosa (or an acceptable permeability enhancer is included), buccal delivery is possible. It is preferable that the drug has a high water solubility, and high potency (as it is only
20 possible to deliver a few milligrams by buccal delivery). Taste masking may be needed as well. Buccal delivery has only traditionally been applied to a handful of products, such as nitroglycerin, the ergot alkaloids, nitrates and selegiline.

25 Water solubility of the active agent is defined by the United States Pharmacopeia. Therefore, active agents which meet the criteria of very soluble, freely soluble, soluble and sparingly soluble as defined therein are encompassed this invention.

30 The microcellular foam lends itself especially well to sachet products, which are intended to be dissolved in a glass of water, with or without effervescing

agents. The foamed structure enhances the solubility of the product. The foam may be granulated and packaged as necessary.

In the case of suppositories and pessaries, the
5 final product can be injection molded to suitable shapes for rectal or vaginal drug delivery.

The process of the invention can, of course, also be used to prepare conventional oral tablets, including immediate release (IR) tablets, sustained
10 release/controlled release (SR/CR) tablets, and even pulsatile release (PR) tablets.

The terms "pharmaceutical agent", "pharmaceutically acceptable agent", "medicament", "active agent" and "drug," are used interchangeably herein, and include
15 agents having a pharmacological activity in a mammal, preferably a human. The pharmacological activity may be prophylactic or for treatment of a disease. The term is not meant to include agents intended solely for agricultural and/or insecticidal usage or agents
20 intended solely for application to plants and/or soil for other purposes.

The term "tablet," as used herein, is intended to encompass the elongated forms known as "caplets" as well as other similar dosage forms, including coated dosage
25 forms.

The dosage forms in accordance with the invention may also include additional pharmaceutically acceptable excipients, including but not limited to sweeteners, solubility enhancers, binders, colorants, plasticizers,
30 lubricants, (super)disintegrants, opacifiers, fillers, flavorants, and effervescent agents.

Suitable thermoplastic polymers can be preferably selected from known pharmaceutical excipients. The physico-chemical characteristics of these polymers will dictate the design of the dosage form, such as rapid
5 dissolve, immediate release, delayed release, modified release such as sustained release, or pulsatile release etc.

However, for purposes herein representative examples of thermoplastic polymers suitable for
10 pharmaceutical applications, include, but are not limited to, poly(ethylene oxide), poly(ethylene glycol), especially at higher molecular weights, such as PEG 4000, 6450, 8000, produced by Dow and Union Carbide; polyvinyl alcohol, polyvinyl acetate, polyvinyl-
15 pyrrolidone (PVP, also know as POVIDONE, USP), manufactured by ISP-Plasdone or BASF-Kollidon, primarily Grades with lower K values (K-15, K-25, but also K-30 to K-90); copovidone, polyvinylpyrrolidone/vinyl acetate (PVP/VA) (60:40) (also known as COPOLYVIDONUM, Ph Eur),
20 manufactured by ISP, PLASDONE S-360 or BASF KOLLIDON VA64; hydroxypropylcellulose (HPC), especially at lower molecular weights, e.g., KLUCEL EF and LF grades, available from Aqualon; polyacrylates and its derivatives such as the Eudragit family of polymers
25 available from Rohm Pharma, poly(alpha-hydroxy acids) and its copolymers such poly(caprolactone), poly(lactide-co-glycolide), poly(alpha-aminoacids) and its copolymers, poly(orthoesters), polyphosphazenes, poly(phosphoesters), and polyanhydrides, or mixtures
30 thereof.

Most of these pharmaceutically acceptable polymers are described in detail in the Handbook of Pharmaceutical

excipients, published jointly by the American Pharmaceutical association and the Pharmaceutical society of Britain.

Polymeric carriers are divided into three categories: (1) water soluble polymers useful for rapid dissolve and immediate release of active agents, (2) water insoluble polymers useful for controlled release of the active agents; and (3) pH sensitive polymers for pulsatile or targeted release of active agents. It is recognized that combinations of both carriers may be used herein. It is also recognized that several of the polyacrylates are pH dependent for the solubility and may fall into both categories.

Preferably, a water soluble polymer for use herein is hydroxypropylcellulose or polyethylene oxide, such as the brand name POLYOX, or mixtures thereof. It is recognized that these polymers may be used in varying molecular weights, with combinations of molecular weights for one polymer being used, such as 100K, 200K, 300K, 400K, 900K and 2000K. Sentry POLYOX is a water soluble resin which is listed in the NF and have approximate molecular weights from 100K to 900K and 1000K to 7000K, and may be used as 1%, 2% and 5% solutions (depending upon molecular weight).

Additional preferred polymers include povidone, having K values and molecular weight ranges from:

K value	Mol. wt.
12	25
15	8000
17	10,000
25	30,000
30	50,000
60	400K
90	1000K
120	3000K

These pharmaceutically acceptable polymers and their derivatives are commercially available and/or be prepared by techniques known in the art. By derivatives it is meant, polymers of varying molecular weight, modification of functional groups of the polymers, or co-polymers of these agents, or mixtures thereof.

Another aspect of the present invention is the use of novel, non-thermoplastic or non-thermosetting excipients (i.e., polyols, starches or maltodextrin), which have been found, when combined with other materials or excipients to create a material that behaves as if it were thermoplastic in the injection molding process. The combination of materials is identified herein as a non-thermosetting polymerized plastic material (nTPM). For instance, while neither lactitol nor maltodextrin are thermoplastic, when blended by hot-melt extrusion, the resultant material can be processed by injection molding as if it were a thermoplastic material. Adjusting the amount of water-soluble excipients (i.e., polyols) in the blends will change the disintegration performance of the material from an immediate release to a more prolonged disintegration. It should be noted, that by adjusting the amount and/or molecular weight of a thermoplastic polymeric carriers (i.e., hydroxypropylcellulose or poly(ethylene oxide)) can effect the disintegration performance of the material as well. In general, higher amounts and/or high molecular weight polymeric carriers will prolong the release performance. Adjusting the levels of water-soluble and polymeric excipients can give a wide spectrum of disintegration from immediate release too much prolonged (i.e., >24 hours) disintegration of the dosage form.

The non-thermosetting polymerized plastic material is a combination of a polyol, and a non-thermosetting or

non-thermoplastic polymer, and/or a non-thermosetting or non-thermoplastic modifier.

For purposes herein representative examples of non-thermoplastic polymers suitable for pharmaceutical applications, include, but are not limited to, relatively water soluble polymers such as the cellulose derivatives, such as carboxymethyl cellulose sodium, methyl cellulose, ethylcellulose, hydroxyethylcellulose (HEC), especially at lower molecular weights, such as NATRASOL 250JR or 250LR, available from Aqualon; hydroxypropylmethyl cellulose (HPMC), hydroxypropylmethyl cellulose phthalate, cellulose acetate phthalate, noncrystalline cellulose, starch and its derivatives, and sodium starch glycolate. The thermosetting polymers are typically present in ranges from 2-90%, preferably 5 to 50%. Percentages are in w/w of total dosage form unless otherwise indicated.

In the invention, the non-thermosetting polymeric excipients can be inherently thermoplastic and therefore be readily injection moldable into solid dosage forms.

For purposes herein representative examples of non-thermosetting modifiers suitable for pharmaceutical applications, which in addition to aiding in the production of a non-thermosetting polymerized plastics material also make a more robust dosage form such as by preventing friability and holding the product together, and include carrageenan, especially, lambda type, VISCARIN GP-109NF, available from FMC; polyvinyl alcohol, starches; polyalditol, hydrogenated starch hydrosylate, sodium starch glycolate, maltodextrin, dextrose equivalents, dextrin, and gelatin. The thermosetting modifiers are typically present in ranges from 2-90%, preferably 5 to 50%.

35

A suitable material which can be processed as non-thermosetting polymerized plastics material is a polyol, such as lactitol, xylitol, sorbitol, erythritol, maltitol, and mannitol, typically in amounts ranging
5 from 5%-70%, preferably 5 to 50%, 5 to 25%. The polyols which can also act as sweeteners, may also impart rapid solubility to the dosage form. As noted previously, lactitol as lactitol monohydrate, USP, is a preferred polyol for use in accordance with the invention.

10 Non-thermosetting modifiers identified as starches, include but are not limited to pregelatinized Corn Starch, Corn Starch, hydroxyethyl starch, or Waxy maize starch, or mixtures thereof, typically in content ranges from 5-25%. Additional reagents, for use herein are the
15 Polyalditols, (e.g. Innovatol PD30 or PD60: the reducing sugars are <1%); and Hydrogenated starch hydrosylates (ex. Stabilte SD30 and SD60).

Non-thermosetting modifiers identified as maltodextrins, include but are not limited to
20 Maltodextrin, typically in a concentration of 5-50%, classified by DE (detrose equivalent) and have a DE range of 5-18. The lower the DE number the more like starch, which has a DE of about 0. The higher the number the more water soluble corn syrup solids, which
25 have a DE range of 20 to 26. Grades that have been found to be useful are characterized by Maltrin M150 (DE 13-17), Maltrin M180 (DE 16.5-19.5) and Maltrin QD M550 (DE 13-17) from Grain Processing Corporation.

30 Suitable colorants for use herein can include food grade soluble dyes and insoluble lakes, and are typically present in ranges of about 0.1 to 2%.

Suitable sweeteners can be utilized, in addition to the polyols, such as aspartame, NF, sucralose and saccharin sodium, USP , or mixtures thereof, typically in content ranges from 0.25% to 2%.

5 Suitable plasticizers, include triacetin, USP, triethyl citrate, FCC, glycerin USP, diethyl phthalate, NF, or tributyl citrate, and mixtures thereof. These liquid plasticizers are typically present in ranges from 1 to 10%.

10 Suitable lubricants, include food grade glycerol monostearate, stearyl alcohol NF, stearic acid NF, Cab-O-Sil, Syloid, zinc stearate USP, magnesium stearate NF, calcium stearate NF, sodium stearate, cetostrearyl alcohol NF, sodium stearyl fumarate NF, or talc, USP,
15 and mixtures thereof. The lubricant content is typically in the range from 0.1% to 2.5%.

 Substances suitable for use as opacifiers/fillers include talc USP, calcium carbonate USP, or kaolin USP, and mixtures thereof. The opacifier/filler content is
20 typically in the range from 0.5 to 2%.

 Suitable effervescing agents, include carbonates and bicarbonates of sodium, calcium, or ammonium, along with acids such as malic acid and citric acid, typically in the range from 0.1 to 10%.

25 Suitable disintegrants and superdisintegrants for use herein include but are not limited to crospovidone, sodium starch glycolate, Eudragit L100-55, sodium carboxymethylcellulose, Ac-di-sol®, carboxymethyl-cellulose, microcrystalline cellulose, and
30 croscarmellose sodium alone or in combination, facilitate the disintegration and solution of the tablet by swelling in the presence of bodily fluids.

Disintegrants are typically in the range from 0.1 to 10%.

Suitable binders for use herein include but are not limited to Veegum®, alginates, alginic acid, agar, guar, 5 tragacanth, locust bean, karaya, gelatin, instantly soluble gelatin, carrageenans, and pectin, typically present in an amount of 0.1 to 10%.

It is recognized that certain excipients such as the maltodextrins, starches, hydroxypropylcellulose, 10 hydroxypropylmethyl cellulose, and polyethylene oxides, will also serve as binders and bulking agents in the tablets of this invention. These excipients are either soluble or will absorb water and swell, aiding disintegration of the tablet.

15 Especially in the production of a flash dispersal tablet, where high water solubility is desired, excipients from some or all of the above categories may be desirable.

For tablets intended to be swallowed, or for 20 controlled or sustained release, excipients from some or all of the above categories may be used, and additional reagents may be desired. The additional reagents, include but are not limited to binders and controlled release (CR) polymers such as, hydroxypropyl- 25 methylcellulose (HMPC), methylcellulose/Na, carboxymethylcellulose, available from Methocels or Aqualon, native or modified starches such as corn starch, wheat starch, rice starch, potato starch, tapioca, and amylose/amylopectin combinations in 30 concentrations of 5%-25%. Maltodextrins may also be useful as a binder or controlled release excipient in concentrations of 5%-50.

The injection molding process as used herein requires the active agent to be stable when subjected to heat, but provides for unique tablet shapes, and release profiles not easily attained by conventional tablet
5 presses.

Suitable pharmaceutically acceptable agents for use in accordance with the invention can be selected from a variety of known classes of drugs including, for example, analgesics, anti-inflammatory agents,
10 anthelmintics, anti-arrhythmic agents, antibiotics (including penicillins), anticoagulants, antidepressants, antidiabetic agents, antiepileptics, antihistamines, antihypertensive agents, antimuscarinic agents, antimycobacterial agents, antineoplastic agents,
15 immunosuppressants, antithyroid agents, antiviral agents, anxiolytic sedatives (hypnotics and neuroleptics), astringents, beta-adrenoceptor blocking agents, blood products and substitutes, cardiac inotropic agents, corticosteroids, cough suppressants
20 (expectorants and mucolytics), diagnostic agents, diuretics, dopaminergics (antiparkinsonian agents), haemostatics, immunological agents, lipid regulating agents, muscle relaxants, parasympathomimetics, parathyroid, calcitonin and biphosphonates,
25 prostaglandins, radiopharmaceuticals, sex hormones (including steroids), anti-allergic agents, stimulants and anorexics, sympathomimetics, thyroid agents, PDE IV inhibitors, CSBP/RK/p38 inhibitors, vasodilators and xanthines.

30 Preferred pharmaceutically acceptable agents include those intended for oral administration, or by suitable body cavity administration such as rectal or

vaginal administration. A description of these classes of drugs and a listing of species within each class can be found in Martindale, The Extra Pharmacopoeia, Twenty-ninth Edition, The Pharmaceutical Press, London, 1989, 5 the disclosure of which is hereby incorporated herein by reference in its entirety. The drug substances contemplated for use herein are commercially available and/or can be prepared by techniques known in the art.

Suitable active ingredients for incorporation into 10 tablets in accordance with the invention may include the many bitter or unpleasant tasting drugs including but not limited to the histamine H₂-antagonists, such as, cimetidine, ranitidine, famotidine, nizatidine, etinidine; lupitidine, nifenidine, niperotidine, 15 roxatidine, sulfotidine, tuvatidine and zaltidine; antibiotics, such as penicillin, ampicillin, amoxycillin, and erythromycin; acetaminophen; aspirin; caffeine, dextromethorphan, diphenhydramine, bromopheniramine, chloropheniramine, theophylline, 20 spironolactone, NSAIDS's such as ibuprofen, ketoprofen, naprosyn, and nabumetone; 5HT₄ inhibitors, such as granisetron, or ondansetron; serotonin re-uptake inhibitors, such as paroxetine, fluoxetine, and sertraline; vitamins such as ascorbic acid, vitamin A, 25 and vitamin D; dietary minerals and nutrients, such as calcium carbonate, calcium lactate, etc., or combinations thereof.

Where suitable, the above noted active agents, in particular the anti-inflammatory agents, may also be 30 combined with other active therapeutic agents, such as various steroids, decongestants, antihistamines, etc.

Examples of numerous suitable excipients include, but are not limited to the following:

Chemical Name	Brand Name	Supplier
Xylitol, NF	Xylisorb	Roquette
Hydroxypropyl cellulose, Food Grade Grade EF: Avg MW- 80,000 Grade GF: Avg MW- 370,000 Grade MF: Avg MW- 850,000 Grade HF: Avg MW- 1,150,000	Klucel	Aqualon
Glycerol Monostearate, NF		Spectrum Chem.
Croscarmellose Sodium, NF	AcDiSol	FMC
Copovidone, Ph Eur	Kollidon VA 64	BASF
Erythritol, Food Grade	C*Eridex 16955	Cerestar
Glycerin, USP		Spectrum Chem.
Sodium Starch Glycolate, NF	Explotab	Mendell
Talc, USP		Spectrum Chem.
Sorbitol, NF	Neosorb	Roquette
Polyethylene Oxide Grade WSR-N80, Avg. MW-200,000	POLYOX	Dow

Chemical Name	Brand Name	Supplier
Crospovidone, NF Grade XL-10	Polyplasdone	ISP
Instantly Soluble Gelatin Type B, MW-3000-9000	Gelita	Kind & Knox
Methacrylic Acid Copolymer, Type C, USP/NF	Eudragit L100- 55	Rohm Pharma
Lactitol. Monohydrate, USP	Lacty M	Purac
Alginic Acid		Spectrum Chem.
Sodium Bicarbonate, USP		Baker
Citric Acid, Monohydrate		Sigma
Calcium Carbonate, Light Powder USP		Spectrum Chem.
□-Carrageenan Type GP-109NF	Vascarin	FMC
Magnesium aluminum silicate, Type IB, USP- NF	VeeGum F	R.T. Vanderbilt
Polyethylene glycol, NF Type E4500 Type E8000	Polyglycol	Dow
Aspartame, NF		Spectrum Chem.

Chemical Name	Brand Name	Supplier
Spearmint Concentrate		International Flavors & Fragrances
Maltodextrin Maltrin M100, DE 10 Maltrin M150, DE 15	Maltrin	Grain Processing Corp
Microcrystalline cellulose	Emcocel 90 M	Mendell
Instantly Soluble Starch	PureCote 3793	Grain Processing Corp
Pregelatinized starch NF	Starch 1500	Colorcon
Low-substituted hydroxypropyl cellulose	LHPC (LH-11)	Shin Etsu

The extrudability of the mixture and its transformation into pellets is important to the success of the injection molding process. Accordingly, the extrusion process will now be described by reference to a series of examples that are merely illustrative and are not to be construed as a limitation of the scope of the invention. All temperatures are given in degrees Celsius, all solvents are of the highest available purity, and all reactions run under pharmaceutical GMP standards or GLP standards unless otherwise indicated.

In each example, pellets were formed by extrusion of a polymer. The base polymer, binder and other major

powdered ingredients (polyol, color, filler, sweeteners, and effervescent agents) were blended in a tumble blender. This blend was then fed into the hopper of a twin-screw extruder where the blend is melted and the screw forces the melt through a 2-3 mm die to make "spaghetti" strands. The strands were air-cooled on a belt conveyer, and then chopped into granules 2-3 mm long by a pelletizer, and fed into a drum. If and when liquid plasticizers or colorants were needed, they were pumped into the polymer melt approximately half-way along the barrel of the extruder. (Alternatively, metering systems can be implemented to feed individual powders, for instance, 4-6 powders, into the extruder without need of a tumble mixer.)

Various formulations, and their results are given in the following examples. For blends not containing glycerin as a plasticizer, all pre-mixing was done in a tumble blender (not shown). For those blends containing glycerin, the glycerin is pumped into the barrel of the extruder (through port 20, FIG. 1), using a liquid metering pump (not shown).

In general, for all of the examples, the processing temperatures were between 90°C and 120°C in the downstream melting zones and die. Extruder speeds, using an APV Baker MP19 extruder with a 25:1 barrel and 19mm, co-rotating twin screws, were in the range of 100-200 rpm. Torque, melt pressure at the die and melt temperatures were recorded during processing. When appropriate, extrudate was tested for melt flow rate (MFR) using a capillary rheometer (Kayeness LCR Series) with a die diameter of 0.762mm and die length of 25.4mm.

EXAMPLE 1

Xylitol	25%
Hydroxypropyl cellulose, Grade EF	74%
Glycerol monostearate	1%

5 Result: extrusion unsuccessful

EXAMPLE 2

Xylitol	25%
Hydroxypropyl cellulose, Grade EF	69%
10 Croscarmellose Sodium	5%
Glycerol monostearate	1%

Result: extrusion successful, but not fast-dissolving

EXAMPLE 3

15 Xylitol	74%
Hydroxypropyl cellulose, Grade EF	20%
Croscarmellose Sodium	5%
Glycerol monostearate	1%

Result: extrusion unsuccessful

20

EXAMPLE 4

Xylitol	79%
Hydroxypropyl cellulose, Grade EF	20%
Glycerol monostearate	1%

25 Result: extrusion unsuccessful

EXAMPLE 5

Xylitol	74%
Copovidone	20%
30 Croscarmellose Sodium	5%
Glycerol monostearate	1%

Result: extrusion unsuccessful

EXAMPLE 6

	Xylitol	79%
	Crospovidone	20%
5	Glycerol monostearate	1%

Result: extrusion unsuccessful

EXAMPLE 7

	Erythritol	60%
10	Hydroxypropyl cellulose, Grade EF	38.5%
	Glycerol monostearate	2.5%

Result: extrusion unsuccessful

Capillary rheometry: MFR@110°C, 9.537g/10min

15 EXAMPLE 8

	Erythritol	60%
	Copovidone	38.5%
	Glycerol monostearate	2.5%

Result: extrusion somewhat successful,

- 20 capillary rheometry: MFR@95°C, 162g/10min; Melt
viscosity too low to be viable injection molded material

EXAMPLE 9

	Erythritol	60%
25	Hydroxypropyl cellulose, Grade MF	38.5%
	Glycerol monostearate	2.5%

Result: extrusion unsuccessful, material too viscous

EXAMPLE 10

30	Hydroxypropyl cellulose, Grade EF	92.5%
	Glycerin	5%
	Glycerol monostearate	2.5%

Result: extrusion successful

Capillary rheometry: MFR@130°C, 21.7g /10min

EXAMPLE 11

- | | | |
|---|-----------------------------------|-------|
| 5 | Hydroxypropyl cellulose, Grade EF | 87.5% |
| | Glycerin | 10% |
| | Glycerol monostearate | 2.5% |
| | Result: extrusion unsuccessful | |

10 EXAMPLE 12

- | | | |
|--|-----------------------------------|-------|
| | Hydroxypropyl cellulose, Grade EF | 90.0% |
| | Glycerin | 7.5% |
| | Glycerol monostearate | 2.5% |
| | Result: extrusion successful | |

- 15 Capillary rheometry: MFR@130°C, 50.3g /10min

EXAMPLE 13

- | | | |
|----|---|-------|
| | Hydroxypropyl cellulose, Grade EF | 91.5% |
| | Glycerin | 5% |
| 20 | Glycerol monostearate | 2.5% |
| | Talc | 1.0% |
| | Result: extrusion successful | |
| | Capillary rheometry: MFR@120°C, 8.391g /10min | |

- 25 Using the foam tablet process described above, this formulation was molded into tablets having up to a 50% weight reduction relative to a solid tablet.

EXAMPLE 14

- | | | |
|----|-----------------------------------|-------|
| 30 | Hydroxypropyl cellulose, Grade EF | 53.5% |
| | Xylitol | 40.0% |
| | Sodium Starch Glycolate, NF | 5.0% |

Glycerol monostearate 1.5%
Result: extrusion unsuccessful, strand too tacky

EXAMPLE 15

5 Hydroxypropyl cellulose, Grade HF 53.5%
Xylitol 40.0%
Sodium Starch Glycolate, NF 5.0%
Glycerol monostearate 1.5%
Result: extrusion unsuccessful, insufficient binder,
10 strand too fragile
Capillary rheometry: viscosity too low for MFR
measurement

EXAMPLE 16

15 Hydroxypropyl cellulose Grade GF 53.5%
Xylitol 40.0%
Sodium Starch Glycolate, NF 5.0%
Glycerol monostearate 1.5%
Result: extrusion somewhat successful
20 Capillary rheometry: MFR@110°C, 107.3g /10min

EXAMPLE 17

Hydroxypropyl cellulose, Grade EF 53.5%
Sorbitol 40.0%
25 Sodium Starch Glycolate, NF 5.0%
Glycerol monostearate 1.5%
Result: extrusion somewhat successful, strand tacky
Capillary rheometry: viscosity too low for MFR
measurement

30

EXAMPLE 18

Polyethylene oxide (PolyOX, WRS N80) 70%

Sorbitol 25%

Sodium Starch Glycolate, NF 5%

Result: extrusion somewhat successful

5 Capillary rheometry: MFR too temperature dependent to be useful

EXAMPLE 19

Polyethylene oxide (PolyOX, WRS N80) 45%

Sorbitol 50%

10 Sodium Starch Glycolate, NF 5%

Result: extrusion somewhat successful

Capillary rheometry: viscosity too high for MFR measurement

15 EXAMPLE 20

Polyethylene oxide (PolyOX, WRS N80) 38.8%

Sorbitol 49.6%

Crospovidone 5.5%

Instantly Soluble Gelatin 5.5%

20 Glycerol monostearate 1.1%

Result: extrusion successful but strand needed to cool on bench

Capillary rheometry: MFR@90°C, 7.934g /10min

25 MFR@95°C, 163.381g/10min (MFR too temperature sensitive to be viable)

EXAMPLE 21

Hydroxypropyl cellulose, Grade EF 49%

Sorbitol 40%

30 Crospovidone 5%

Instantly Soluble Gelatin 5%

Glycerol monostearate 1%

Result: extrusion unsuccessful

EXAMPLE 22

	Hydroxypropyl cellulose, Grade GF	49%
5	Sorbitol	40%
	Crospovidone	5%
	Instantly Soluble Gelatin	5%
	Glycerol monostearate	1%

Result: extrusion unsuccessful

10

EXAMPLE 23

	Polyethylene oxide (PolyOX, WRS N80)	40%
	Sorbitol	49%
	Crospovidone	5%
15	Eudragit L100-55	5%
	Glycerol monostearate	1%

Result: extrusion poor

Capillary rheometry: MFR@90°C, 22.328 g/10min

20 EXAMPLE 24

	Polyethylene oxide (PolyOX, WRS N80)	40%
	Lactitol	49%
	Crospovidone	5%
	Eudragit L100-55	5%
25	Glycerol monostearate	1%

Result: extrusion acceptable

Capillary rheometry: MFR@115°C, 10.870 g/10min

EXAMPLE 25

30	Polyethylene oxide (PolyOX, WRS N80)	40%
	Lactitol	49%
	Crospovidone	5%

Alginate Acid 5%
Glycerol monostearate 1%
Result: extrusion acceptable
Capillary rheometry: MFR@110°C, 1.726 g/10min

5

EXAMPLE 26

Polyethylene oxide (PolyOX, WRS N80) 40%
Lactitol 45%
Crospovidone 5%
10 Alginate Acid 5%
Sodium bicarbonate 4%
Glycerol monostearate 1%

Result: extrusion acceptable
Capillary rheometry: MFR@110°C 1.686 g/10min

15

EXAMPLE 27

Polyethylene oxide (PolyOX, WRS N80) 30%
Lactitol 59%
Crospovidone 5%
20 Eudragit L100-55 5%
Glycerol monostearate 1%

Result: extrusion acceptable
Capillary rheometry: MFR@110°C, 3.106 g/10min

25 EXAMPLE 28

Polyethylene oxide (PolyOX, WRS N80) 20%
Lactitol 69%
Crospovidone 5%
Eudragit L100-55 5%
30 Glycerol monostearate 1%

Result: extrusion unacceptable
Capillary rheometry: MFR@110°C, 10.679 g/10min

EXAMPLE 29

	Polyethylene oxide (PolyOX, WRS N80)	30%
	Lactitol	62%
5	Crospovidone	2.5%
	Citric Acid	2.5%
	Calcium bicarbonate	2.5%
	Glycerol monostearate	0.5%
	Result: extrusion unacceptable	
10	Capillary rheometry: MFR@105°C, 8.713 g/10min	

EXAMPLE 30

	Polyethylene oxide (PolyOX, WRS N80)	40%
	Lactitol	49%
15	Crospovidone	5%
	λ -Carrageenan	5%
	Glycerol monostearate	1%
	Result: extrusion acceptable	
	Capillary rheometry: MFR@110°C, 4.143 g/10min	

20

EXAMPLE 31

	Polyethylene oxide (PolyOX, WRS N80)	15%
	Lactitol	65%
	Citric Acid	5%
25	Calcium carbonate	5%
	λ -Carrageenan	10%
	Result: extrusion unacceptable, insufficient binder	
	Capillary rheometry: MFR@105°C, 2.617 g/10min	

30 EXAMPLE 32

	Polyethylene oxide (PolyOX, WRS N80)	15%
	Lactitol	55%

Sorbitol	10%
Citric Acid	5%
Calcium carbonate	5%
λ -Carrageenan	10%

5 Result: extrusion unacceptable, insufficient binder

EXAMPLE 33

Polyethylene oxide (PolyOX, WRS N80)	25%
Lactitol	60%
10 Citric Acid	5%
Calcium carbonate	5%
λ -Carrageenan	5%

Result: extrusion somewhat acceptable

Capillary rheometry: MFR@105°C, 6.571 g/10min

15

EXAMPLE 34

Polyethylene oxide (PolyOX, WRS N80)	25%
Lactitol	60%
Citric Acid	5%
20 Sodium bicarbonate	5%
λ -Carrageenan	5%

Result: extrusion poor, sodium bicarbonate "volatile",
foaming strand

25 EXAMPLE 35

Polyethylene oxide (PolyOX, WRS N80)	30%
Lactitol	50%
Citric Acid	5%
Calcium Carbonate	9.5%
30 VeeGum F	5%
Glycerol Monostearate	0.5%

Result: extruded well at up to 2 kg/hr

Capillary rheometry: MFR@110°C, 0.207 g/10min, very stiff at this temperature

EXAMPLE 36

5	Polyethylene oxide (PolyOX, WRS N80)	30%
	Lactitol	50%
	Citric Acid	5%
	Calcium Carbonate	9.5%
	Crospovidone	5%
10	Glycerol Monostearate	0.5%
Result: extruded well at up to 2 kg/hr		
Capillary rheometry: MFR@115°C, 0.060 g/10min, very stiff at this temperature		

15

EXAMPLE 37

	Polyethylene oxide (PolyOX, WRS N80)	30%
	Lactitol	50%
	Citric Acid	5%
20	Calcium Carbonate	9.5%
	Eudragit L100-55	5%
	Glycerol Monostearate	0.5%
Result: extruded well at up to 2 kg/hr		
Capillary rheometry: MFR@110°C, 3.068 g/10min		

25

EXAMPLE 38

	Polyethylene oxide (PolyOX, WRS N80)	25%
	Polyethylene glycol E8000	5%
	Lactitol	50%
30	Citric Acid	5%
	Calcium Carbonate	9.5%
	Eudragit L100-55	5%

Glycerol Monostearate 0.5%
Result: extruded well at up to 2 kg/hr
Capillary rheometry: MFR@110°C, 1.719 g/10min

5 EXAMPLE 39

Polyethylene oxide (PolyOX, WRS N80) 24.45%
Polyethylene glycol E4500 5%
Lactitol 50%
Citric Acid 5%

10 Calcium Carbonate 9.5%
Eudragit L100-55 5%
Glycerol Monostearate 0.5%
Aspartame 0.5%
Spearmint Concentrate 0.05%

15 Result: extruded well at 1.5 kg/hr
Capillary rheometry: MFR@110C, 0.685 g/10min

EXAMPLE 40

Polyethylene oxide (PolyOX, WRS N80) 24.45%
20 Polyethylene glycol E4500 5%
Lactitol 50%
Citric Acid 5%
Calcium Carbonate 9.5%
Eudragit L100-55 5%
25 Glycerol Monostearate 0.5%
Aspartame 0.5%
Spearmint Concentrate 0.05%

Result: extruded well at 1.5 kg/hr

14 kg of this blend were extruded for trial, and the
30 extruded material was molded into tablets using the
foam tablet process described above.

Capillary rheometry: MFR@105°C, 6.575 g/10min,
MFR@110°C, 7.204 g/10 min. Up to a 60% weight reduction
relative to a solid tablet was achieved.

5 EXAMPLE 41

Polyethylene oxide (PolyOX, WRS N80)	19.45%
Polyethylene glycol E4500	10%
Lactitol	50%
Citric Acid	5%

10 Calcium Carbonate	9.5%
Eudragit L100-55	5%
Glycerol Monostearate	0.5%
Aspartame	0.5%
Spearmint Concentrate	0.05%

15 Result: strand broke readily when extruded, not a viable
formulation

EXAMPLE 42

Lactitol	25%
20 Maltodextrin (Maltrin M100)	70%
Sodium Starch Glycolate	5%

Result: starch content too high, pressure exceeded
maximum

25 EXAMPLE 43

Lactitol	45%
Maltodextrin (Maltrin M100)	50%
Sodium Starch Glycolate	5%

Result: could be extruded at 2 kg/hr but brittle

30 Capillary rheometry: MFR@110°C, 41.474 g/10min

EXAMPLE 44

Lactitol	50%
Maltodextrin (Maltrin M150)	45%
Sodium Starch Glycolate	5%

5 Result: extruded well at 2 kg/hr

Capillary rheometry: MFR@110°C, 37.734 g/10min

EXAMPLE 45

Lactitol	50%
10 Microcrystalline cellulose (Emcocel 90M)	45%
Sodium Starch Glycolate	5%

Result: extruded poorly, even at 0.5 kg/hr, too viscous

EXAMPLE 46

15 Lactitol	50%
Maltodextrin (Maltrin M150)	20%
Sodium Starch Glycolate	25%

Result: extruded poorly, material too thin to pelletize

20 EXAMPLE 47

Lactitol	50%
Mannitol	20%
Maltodextrin (Maltrin M150)	20%
Instantly Soluble Starch	5%
25 Sodium Starch Glycolate	5%

Result: extruded at 2 kg/hr but the strand was very thin, did not pelletize well, melt viscosity is very low; too low to be injection moldable; no MFR could be calculated.

30

EXAMPLE 48

Lactitol	50%
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Mannitol 25%

Instantly Soluble Starch 15%

Sodium Starch Glycolate 10%

Result: extruded at 2 kg/hr but the strand was very
5 thin, did not pelletize well, melt viscosity is very low
Capillary rheometry: MFR@110°C, 119.168 g/10min

EXAMPLE 49

Lactitol 40%

10 Maltodextrin (Maltrin M150) 50%

Sodium Starch Glycolate 10%

Result: extruded very well at 2 kg/hour

Capillary rheometry: MFR@110°C, 12.497 g/10min

15 EXAMPLE 50

Lactitol 40%

Maltodextrin (Maltrin M150) 50%

VeeGum F 10%

Result: extruded very well at 2 kg/hour

20 Capillary rheometry: MFR@110°C, 13.646 g/10min

EXAMPLE 51

Lactitol 40%

Maltodextrin (Maltrin M150) 50%

25 AcDiSol 10%

Result: extruded very well at 2 kg/hour

Capillary rheometry: MFR@110°C, 15.312 g/10min

EXAMPLE 52

30 Lactitol 40%

Maltodextrin (Maltrin M150) 50%

Crospovidone 10%

Result: extruded very well at 2 kg/hour

Capillary rheometry: 8.995 g/10min

EXAMPLE 53

5	Lactitol	40%
	Maltodextrin (Maltrin M150)	50%
	Eudragit L100-55	10%

Result: extruded very well at 2 kg/hour

Capillary rheometry: MFR@110°C, 11.722 g/10min

10

EXAMPLE 54

	Lactitol	40%
	Maltodextrin (Maltrin M150)	50%
	Eudragit L100-55	5%
15	Crospovidone	5%

Result: extruded very wall at 2 kg/hour

Capillary rheometry: MFR@115°C, 12.893 g/10min

EXAMPLE 55

20	Lactitol	45%
	Maltodextrin (Maltrin M150)	40%
	Pregelatinized Starch NF (Starch 1500)	5%
	Crospovidone	10%

Result: extruded very well at 2kg/hour

25 Capillary rheometry: MFR@110°C, 6.239 g/10min

EXAMPLE 56

	Lactitol	50%
	Maltodextrin (Maltrin M150)	30%
30	Pregelatinized Starch NF (Starch 1500)	10%
	Crospovidone	10%

Result: extruded well at 2 kg/hour

Capillary rheometry: MFR@110°C, 8.075 g/10min

EXAMPLE 57

	Lactitol	45%
5	Maltodextrin (Maltrin M150)	40%
	Pregelatinized Starch NF (Starch 1500)	5%
	Crospovidone	5%
	Eudragit L100-55	5%
	Result: extruded well at 2 kg/hour	
10	Capillary rheometry: MFR@110°C, 13.879 g/10min	

EXAMPLE 58

	Lactitol	65%
	Pregelatinized Starch NF (Starch 1500)	15%
15	Crospovidone	10%
	Eudragit L100-55	10%
	Result: marginal process at 2 kg/hour, pelletized poorly with large amount of powder	

20 EXAMPLE 59

	Lactitol	60%
	Crospovidone	20%
	Eudragit L100-55	20%
	Result: marginal process at 2 kg/hour, insufficient	
25	binder	

EXAMPLE 60

	Lactitol	40%
	Calcium carbonate, Light Powder USP	20%
30	Crospovidone	20%
	Eudragit L100-55	20%

Result: marginal process at 1 kg/hour, strand very fragile

EXAMPLE 61

5	Lactitol	50%
	Erythritol	20%
	Maltodextrin (Maltrin M150)	25%
	Sodium Starch Glycolate	5%

Result: processing temperature to form strand very low,
10 ~70°C, strand required extra cooling time to pelletize.

EXAMPLE 62

	Lactitol	65%
	Maltodextrin (Maltrin M150)	5%
15	Pregelatinized Starch NF (Starch 1500)	15%
	Crospovidone	7.5%
	Eudragit L100-55	7.5%

Result: extruded at 2 kg/hour, pelletized poorly with
large amount of powder

20

EXAMPLE 63

	Lactitol	70%
	Pregelatinized Starch NF (Starch 1500)	15%
	Crospovidone	7.5%
25	Eudragit L100-55	7.5%

Result: extruded at 2 kg/hour, pelletized poorly with
large amount of powder

EXAMPLE 64

30	Lactitol	65%
	Erythritol	5%
	Pregelatinized Starch NF (Starch 1500)	15%

Crospovidone 7.5%

Eudragit L100-55 7.5%

Result: extruded at 2 kg/hour, pelletized poorly with large amount of powder

5

EXAMPLE 65

Lactitol 60%

Erythritol 10%

Pregelatinized Starch NF (Starch 1500) 15%

10 Crospovidone 7.5%

Eudragit L100-55 7.5%

Result: extruded at 2 kg/hour, but strand thinned and required extra cooling time, pelletized poorly with large amount of powder

15

EXAMPLE 66

Lactitol 55%

Maltodextrin (Maltrin QD550) 40%

Eudragit L100-55 5%

20 Crospovidone 5%

Result: extruded very well at 2 kg/hour

Capillary rheometry: MFR@110°C, 18.849 g/10min

EXAMPLE 67

25 Lactitol 40%

Maltodextrin (Maltrin M180) 50%

Eudragit L100-55 5%

Crospovidone 5%

Result: extruded very well at 2 kg/hour

30 Capillary rheometry: MFR@110°C, 18.877 g/10min

EXAMPLE 68

	Lactitol	40%
	Maltodextrin (Maltrin M150)	45%
	Eudragit L100-55	7.5%
5	Crospovidone	7.5%

Result: extruded very well at 2 kg/hour
Capillary rheometry: MFR@115°C, 9.103 g/10min

EXAMPLE 69

10	Lactitol	40%
	Maltodextrin (Maltrin M150)	45%
	Eudragit L100-55	7.5%
	Low-substituted hydroxypropyl cellulose	7.5%

Result: extruded well at 1.5 kg/hour but strand was soft
15 Capillary rheometry: MFR@110°C, 13.076 g/10min

EXAMPLE 70

	Lactitol	40%
	Maltodextrin (Maltrin QD550)	50%
20	Eudragit L100-55	5%
	Crospovidone	5%

Result: extruded well at 2 kg/hour but pelletizing was difficult at times
Capillary rheometry: MFR@110°C, 14.872 g/10min

25

EXAMPLE 71

	Lactitol	40%
	Maltodextrin (Maltrin QD550)	45.5%
	Eudragit L100-55	5%
30	Crospovidone	7.5%
	Talc, USP	2%

Result: extruded very well at 2 kg/hour

Capillary rheometry: MFR@110°C, 14.908 g/10min

EXAMPLE 72

	Lactitol	40%
5	Maltodextrin (Maltrin QD550)	43%
	Eudragit L100-55	5%
	Crospovidone	10%
	Talc, USP	2%
	Result: extruded very well at 2 kg/hour	
10	Capillary rheometry: MFR@110°C, 8.968 g/10min	

EXAMPLE 73

	Lactitol	40%
	Maltodextrin (Maltrin QD550)	45.5%
15	Eudragit L100-55	5%
	Crospovidone	7.5%
	Glycerol Monostearate	2%
	Result: extruded very well at 2 kg/hour	
	Capillary rheometry: MFR@110°C, 41.569 g/10min	

20

EXAMPLE 74

	Rosiglitazone maleate (anhydrous)	0.96%
	Lactitol	40%
	Maltodextrin (Maltrin QD550)	44.55%
25	Eudragit L100-55	5%
	Crospovidone	7.5%
	Talc, USP	2%
	Result: extruded very well at 2kg/hour	
	Capillary rheometry: MFR@105°C, 8.868 g/10min	
30	MFR@110°C, 14.251 g/10min	
	Injection molding of blend attempted using mold in Figure 3. Solid tablets ejected but runner remained	

with mold, preventing automatic operation of the injection molding machine.

EXAMPLE 75

5	Hydroxypropyl cellulose, Grade EF	93%
	Glycerin	4%
	Glycerol monostearate	2%
	Talc	1%

- 10 Comment: extrusion successful
Capillary rheometry: MFR@120°C, 6.419 g /10min
Material was successfully injection molded into solid forms.

15 EXAMPLE 76

	Carvedilol®	5.15%
	Hydroxypropyl cellulose, Grade EF	88.85%
	Glycerin	4.00%
	Glycerol monostearate	2.00%

20

Comment: extrusion successful
Capillary rheometry: MFR@120°C, 21.027 g /10min
Material was successfully injection molded into solid forms.

25

EXAMPLE 77

	Carvedilol ®	5.15%
	Hydroxypropyl cellulose, Grade EF	92.85%
	Glycerol monostearate	2.00%

30

Comment: extrusion successful

Capillary rheometry: MFR@120°C, 2.736 g /10min and
@125°C, 5.319 g/10 min

Material was successfully injection molded into solid
forms.

5

EXAMPLE 78

Carvedilol®	5.15%
Hydroxypropyl cellulose, Grade EF	92.85%
Magnesium stearate	2.00%

10

Comment: extrusion successful

Capillary rheometry: MFR@120°C, 6.617 g /10min

Material was successfully injection molded into solid
forms.

15

EXAMPLE 79

Carvedilol®	5.15%
Hydroxypropyl cellulose, Grade EF	92.85%
Talc	2.00%

20

Comment: extrusion successful

Capillary rheometry: MFR@120°C, 8.016 g /10 min

Material injection molded poorly.

25 The inclusion of a polyol (preferably lactitol) in
the above examples serves two purposes. First, it is a
water-soluble excipient that facilitates disintegration
and solution of a flash-dissolve, immediate release
tablet. Second, at elevated temperatures, it
30 plasticizes the blend, allowing for extrusion and
injection molding.

In general, the process temperature was no higher than 120°C, preferably less than 110°C, and optimally 100°C or less. The time the polymer blend is exposed to this elevated temperature is no more than about two
5 minutes. In this way potential thermal degradation can be minimized.

In general, blends having an MFR between 5g/10 minutes and 20g/10 minutes at the temperature setting for injection molding (i.e., <120°C) will have a melt
10 viscosity that will allow the material to be injection molded.

Glidants, (i.e., talc, USP, and glycerol monostearate) may be needed in the formulation to prevent tablets from sticking to the mold.

15 Pellets formed by the melt extrusion process depicted in FIG. 1 were fed into the hopper of an injection molding machine as depicted in FIG. 2, and melted in the barrel. Using the process described in US Patents 5,334,356 and 6,051,174, and published
20 International patent applications WO 98/08667 and WO 99/32544, supercritical N₂ was injected into the melted polymer in the injection molding machine. The pressure and temperature were controlled to ensure the supercritical fluid (SCF) formed a single phase with the
25 polymer. The operation of the screw in the molding machine caused a cushion of melted polymer to form at the injection end of the barrel. With the mold closed, the polymer was rapidly forced into the mold by driving the screw forward. Air in the mold was forced out
30 during the injection stroke and the mold cavity completely filled with polymer. When the pressure was reduced in the mold, the gas came out of solution to form microscopic bubbles in the polymer. The mold was

chilled, allowing the polymer to "freeze" into tablet shape. The mold was then opened, and ejection pins popped the resultant tablets out of the mold, depositing them into a drum.

- 5 A preferred formulation for about 20 kg of a polymer blend to use in this process with an active agent is

	Hydroxypropylcellulose, Grade EF, MW ~30,000	91.5%
	Glycerin (as plasticizer)	5.0%
10	Glycerol monostearate	2.5%
	Talc (nucleating agent for foam)	1.0%

- 15 The invention makes it possible to foam tablets, via an injection molding process, with an approximately 50% weight reduction relative to a solid tablet, of pharmaceutically acceptable polymers, to package the tablets in bottles or other conventional tablet containers instead of molding them in the blister packages in which they are to be sold, and to shape the tablets in any of a broad variety of possible shapes. Once the injection molding machine is stabilized, the process may be run with very little operator involvement, around the clock, producing a very homogeneous product.

- 25 By utilization of less soluble pharmaceutically acceptable polymers in the injection molding of tablets, swallowable tablets having varying release characteristics similar to conventional immediate release or controlled release tablets may be produced.

- 30 The injection molding of tablets (especially flash-release tablets) significantly reduces the complexity of the pharmaceutical manufacturing process. The injection

molding process of this invention preferably utilizes a single excipient feed (pellets extruded from a preceding extrusion process producing a homogenous intermediate), and can be carried out using a single fully-automated injection molding press designed for continuous (24 hour, 7 day) operation.

The novel dosage forms of this invention, based upon a water soluble foam, provide for unique drug delivery possibilities.

Various modifications can be made in the formulations and processes described herein. For example, although the preferred process utilizes supercritical N₂ or CO₂ injection, it is possible to produce suitable microcellular foamed dosage forms by injection of N₂ or CO₂ in gaseous form under pressure into the polymer melt, or to utilize a chemical blowing agent or reaction injection molding. Similarly, whereas in the preferred embodiment, the polymer resin is formulated with the active agent already incorporated into it, the active agent can be introduced in other ways, for example, it can be injected into the melt in the extruder, or where possible, dissolved in, and injected along with, the supercritical fluid.

All publications, including but not limited to patents and patent applications, cited in this specification are herein incorporated by reference as if each individual publication were specifically and individually indicated to be incorporated by reference herein as though fully set forth.

The above description fully discloses the invention including preferred embodiments thereof. Modifications and improvements of the embodiments specifically

disclosed herein are within the scope of the following claims.

Without further elaboration, it is believed that one skilled in the art can, using the preceding
5 description, utilize the present invention to its fullest extent. Therefore the Examples herein are to be construed as merely illustrative and not a limitation of the scope of the invention in any way. The embodiments of the invention in which an exclusive property or
10 privilege is claimed are defined as follows.